

THE NOISE ROOM

by

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Production History:

Developed at HB Playwrights Foundation, 2002–2003. Workshop production March 2003.

Readings:

University of California, San Diego, September 2003

Idyllwild Arts Academy, November 2006

California State Summer School for the Arts, July 2008

Characters

ELIZABETH - a 17 year-old American girl, living in Kenya.

MARINA - the Finish Ambassador's daughter, 17.

MICHELLE - Elizabeth's 15 year-old sister.

ANTERI - Marina's 15 year-old brother.

EMAAD - an 18 year-old Iranian boy who's never been to Iran.

Setting

The Noise Room - a small guest house in the garden of the Finnish Ambassador's residence, Nairobi, Kenya. September 1998.

SCENE 1

October 1998. The Noise Room. A small hut-like guest house behind a large villa in Muthaiga, a rich suburb of Nairobi, Kenya. There is one door that opens onto the garden, a lush tropical place, and another onto a small bathroom. There are windows that don't quite shut, so a cool breeze can easily enter. Everything looks old, even the parquet floors. The most remarkable thing, however, are the instruments that line the walls of the noise room from floor to ceiling, instruments from every culture, from every era, neatly displayed.

A mattress has been placed in the center of the room, taking up most of the floor space. Elizabeth and Marina sleep on the mattress, sharing covers. A voice approaches, outside.

JACINTA

(offstage)

Ho-dee! Ho-dee!

Marina stirs, looks in direction of the door. She rises. Staggered to the door and opens it. She's handed a tray which she brings into the room.

MARINA

Thanks.

She shuts the door with her foot and brings the tray to the bed.

MARINA

Psst. Liz. Lizzybeth. Morning.

Elizabeth stirs, sees Marina.

MARINA

Jacinta brought coffee.

ELIZABETH

Sweet.

MARINA

Probably means my dad wants us up.

ELIZABETH

Do you think that means something happened?

MARINA

Like another bomb?

ELIZABETH

Maybe.

MARINA

No way. It's like two o'clock. He just wants us up.

ELIZABETH

How do you know?

MARINA

It would be different if something happened.

ELIZABETH

Don't you feel guilty?

MARINA

What?

ELIZABETH

Seventeen years old, sleeping till two cause you've been out late. Servant brings you coffee.

MARINA

Melissa and I used to do this every weekend.

ELIZABETH

I feel guilty.

MARINA

You haven't lived here long enough.

ELIZABETH

I guess.

MARINA

You get used to it. They need employment. It's not like what we're doing is bad. You just, treat them like people. People doing a job. Everyone's got to have a job.

ELIZABETH

I know, we had an ayah growing up. She just never served us like this.

MARINA

Amra?

ELIZABETH

She bossed us around more than we bossed her.

MARINA

You don't let her boss you around now.

ELIZABETH

I do. I still do.

MARINA

Well, you're here. And she wouldn't approve of this.

ELIZABETH

That's probably why I feel guilty.

MARINA

Coffee?

ELIZABETH

Yeah, totally.

Marina pours coffee. They drink.

MARINA

Crazy night, huh?

ELIZABETH

You puked.

MARINA

I did, didn't I?

ELIZABETH

Christoffer took care of you. He got us a ride home. He was sweet.

MARINA

He is sweet. He's a good little boyfriend.

ELIZABETH

Yeah? I wish I could talk to him. We were in the car with all these Swedish guys, all babbling away. You were passed out. I didn't know what any of them were saying.

MARINA

Learn Swedish.

ELIZABETH

It's not that easy. I don't already speak seven languages.

MARINA

It's not that hard. I could teach you Finnish. If you knew Finnish, then...

ELIZABETH

I'm not staying here long enough for you to teach me Finnish.

MARINA

What do you mean?

ELIZABETH

Nothing. Just - isn't Finnish one of those languages that has nothing to do with any other language?

MARINA

Yeah, I guess.

ELIZABETH

I'd be better off learning Swahili.

MARINA

Who speaks Swahili?

ELIZABETH

Kenyans.

MARINA

I mean that we hang out with?

ELIZABETH

Gicho, Daniel, Nancy, Barbara...

MARINA

They all speak English, too.

ELIZABETH

Don't you ever wonder what they're saying? What people are saying, when you walk down the street?

MARINA

I don't really think about it.

ELIZABETH

I do. It bothers me. It's like all this noise when you don't understand it.

MARINA

I think it's the other way around.

ELIZABETH

Yeah?

MARINA

When I go back to Finland, all I can hear are other people's conversations, I can't listen to my own. But here...it just becomes like wallpaper. The only people in your world are the ones you can actually understand. Everyone else fades away.

ELIZABETH
Deep.

MARINA
Pretty crazy night for you, too. What was going on with Emaad there?

ELIZABETH
What?

MARINA
You and Emaad. It seemed like there was something going on.

ELIZABETH
He kissed me.

MARINA
He did? I didn't realize that. When did he kiss you?

ELIZABETH
You were dancing.

MARINA
Wow.

ELIZABETH
I didn't want to tell you, I mean, I didn't know how you would...

MARINA
I'm cool.

ELIZABETH
Really?

MARINA
Yeah, sure, it was last year. Whatever.

ELIZABETH
I didn't kiss him back.

MARINA
Why not?

ELIZABETH
I don't know.

MARINA
You don't like him?

ELIZABETH
I don't know.

MARINA

He's hot. He's smart, he's like, perfect.

ELIZABETH

You still like him.

MARINA

No.

ELIZABETH

I just. I didn't know why he was kissing me.

MARINA

Maybe because you looked good?

ELIZABETH

Yeah.

MARINA

Come on. It doesn't have to be deep.

ELIZABETH

He's just different. He's really different from the guys I normally date.

MARINA

He's not a suicidal poet?

ELIZABETH

I shouldn't tell you anything.

MARINA

I'm serious. What's the problem?

ELIZABETH

I just don't know if he's my type. I don't know...where I come from, guys like him...

MARINA

Where you come from there are no guys like him.

ELIZABETH

Well, of course there are. DC, it's an international city, there are people from all over...like, I had friends from Turkey, from Kuwait.

MARINA

He's from Iran but he's lived in Kenya his whole life. You know anyone like that?

ELIZABETH

No, that's not what I'm saying. But I know how these things can be a problem...different cultures...

MARINA

You don't know that. You don't know this guy.

ELIZABETH

Exactly. I don't know anything about him.

MARINA

It's not like you have to marry him. Call him. You should call him. Today.

ELIZABETH

What would I say?

MARINA

Just say you want to talk. That you were shocked last night so didn't know what to do, but you want to talk, and maybe...

ELIZABETH

And maybe he was drunk and doesn't even know who I am.

MARINA

So you tell him.

ELIZABETH

I can't just do that.

MARINA

Why not? I would.

ELIZABETH

You're like that.

MARINA

Fine. You can't call him. What about a strategic run-in.

ELIZABETH

What?

MARINA

He'll probably be at the Village Market. Let's go to the Village.

ELIZABETH

How?

MARINA

I'll make some calls. Someone'll take us. Christoffer probably will.

ELIZABETH

I don't want to, Marina. If something's going to happen, I'll let it happen. I don't want to force anything. I don't want to...

MARINA

Have a boyfriend.

ELIZABETH

No, it's not that.

MARINA

A boyfriend. Staring you in the face and you say no. What's wrong?

ELIZABETH

Nothing.

MARINA

Just because we run into him doesn't mean anything has to happen.

ELIZABETH

I know.

MARINA

It's just some people, hanging out at the Village. Emaad's cousin owns the place, you know? We can play mini golf for free. Melissa and I used to play all the time. We can eat gelato.

ELIZABETH

Yeah?

MARINA

You can get to know him.

ELIZABETH

Okay.

MARINA

Great. I'm gonna go call Imran.

ELIZABETH

Why?

MARINA

Cause he's our ticket to finding Emaad.

ELIZABETH

Right.

Knock on the door.

MARINA

We're not decent!

MICHELLE
(*offstage*)
Is my sister in there?

MARINA
Who?

ELIZABETH
Chelle? That you?

MICHELLE
(*offstage*)
Can I come in?

MARINA
Be my - (*opens door*)

ELIZABETH
No.

MARINA
Guest.

MICHELLE
Wow.

MARINA
Quite the room, huh?

MICHELLE
Yeah.

MARINA
I'll go. Call Imran. Get breakfast. Be back.

Marina exits.

MICHELLE
You haven't had breakfast yet?

ELIZABETH
No. And I'm not going to. Food here is like...do you know what Finnish people eat?

MICHELLE
No. What?

ELIZABETH
I don't know, but it's gross. What are you doing here?

MICHELLE
You go out last night? You hear what happened?

ELIZABETH
No.

MICHELLE
Carjacking. Airport road.

ELIZABETH
Oh.

MICHELLE
See if you get to go to Carnivore again.

ELIZABETH
We went to The Barn.

MICHELLE
Think it'll make a difference to Dad?

ELIZABETH
Anyone hurt?

MICHELLE
Hostages. Three German tourists. Dad's freaking out. Not going to let us out of the house ever again, I bet. Definitely not at night.

ELIZABETH
How did you get here?

MICHELLE
I just left. Caught a ride.

ELIZABETH
Does Dad know?

MICHELLE
No.

ELIZABETH
Michelle! He's probably freaking out!

MICHELLE
He was already freaking cause you weren't home. Let him freak.

ELIZABETH
He knows where to find me.

MICHELLE
He talked to Marina's dad. But before that he was sure that you were one of the tourists, somehow.

ELIZABETH

I bet.

MICHELLE

But you were right here, fast asleep through all of it.

ELIZABETH

Yup.

MICHELLE

So this is where you always are. No wonder.

ELIZABETH

Wonder what?

MICHELLE

You know what I mean. Is this Marina's room?

ELIZABETH

No. No, she has a bedroom in the house. We just like it better out here.

MICHELLE

I just want to rip everything apart.

ELIZABETH

Don't.

MICHELLE

I'm not going to, chill.

ELIZABETH

I like it like this.

MICHELLE

Whatever.

*Michele crosses to the wall, picks up
an instrument, goes to play with it.*

ELIZABETH

So what's up? Why did you run away?

MICHELLE

I told you, Dad was acting crazy.

ELIZABETH

...And?

MICHELLE

I found out Amra was reading my email.

ELIZABETH

How did she get the password?

MICHELLE

It was stupid. She figured it out.

ELIZABETH

How do you know?

MICHELLE

I thought she might be for while, and I was like, well, I'm not going to make a big deal of this unless I have proof, right? I know she used to read my diaries and stuff when I was a kid.

ELIZABETH

She read mine, too.

MICHELLE

But there was no way to prove it, so I didn't do anything. You know, just careful what I said. But then Mom was talking about something and I didn't know what she was talking about. So I thought...there's a message missing here. And there it was. In old mail.

ELIZABETH

What did it say?

MICHELLE

I don't know, I didn't read it yet. It just made me so angry. So I went to Dad and I said Dad, Amra's been reading my email and he was like well, she's your parent now so she's allowed to. So I was like, "No, NO, NO!" and I was saying no to the idea that any parent was ever allowed to read my stuff and he thought I was saying no to the idea that she was my parent and he slapped me! He fucking slapped me.

ELIZABETH

Oh, baby...

MICHELLE

Yeah.

ELIZABETH

Did it hurt?

MICHELLE

Of course it hurt!

ELIZABETH

What did you do? What did he...

MICHELLE

I don't know. I ran. I just ran the hell out of there. Joseph was at the gate, I practically knocked him over. I thought I would get in a matatu or something. Go to the Village, go to Westlands, go to wherever matatus go. Just get away. Then these guys passed by, from school, seniors. I told them I was looking for you so they brought me here.

ELIZABETH

Who was it?

MICHELLE

I don't know. Some guys. Some, like, soccer player guys. Daniel, maybe? He was driving, he's Kenyan. And Imran. And -

ELIZABETH

Emaad?

MICHELLE

Yeah.

ELIZABETH

Did they leave?

MICHELLE

I don't know. No. They were talking to Marina's brother. To Anteri.

ELIZABETH

Shit.

MICHELLE

What? You don't like them? They seemed so nice.

ELIZABETH

I guess.

MICHELLE

Anyways. I can't go back there. I can't go home now. Can I stay here with you?

ELIZABETH

What do you mean? No.

MICHELLE

Why not? Marina's family seems really cool. They don't mind that you're over here all the time, so what if I stay?

ELIZABETH

It's not my place.

Marina enters.

MARINA

Liz! You'll never believe who's here!

ELIZABETH

Emaad.

MARINA

Yeah!

MICHELLE

They brought me.

MARINA

I know. Daniel said you were running down the street.

MICHELLE

I am such a dork.

ELIZABETH

No you're not, sweetie.

MICHELLE

Shut up, don't call me that.

ELIZABETH

Now you're going to take things out on me?

MICHELLE

Yes.

ELIZABETH

Come on, that's not fair.

MARINA

Should I tell them to go?

ELIZABETH

I don't know.

MICHELLE

Oh. Am I inconveniencing you? You want to do this another time.

ELIZABETH

Michelle. I haven't had breakfast yet. I haven't even - I have to pee.

MICHELLE

Go ahead!

Elizabeth shoots her a look then proceeds to the bathroom, closes the door. We can hear the sound of her peeing.

MICHELLE

Are there instruments in there, too?

MARINA

No. You all right? You want some coffee?

MICHELLE

No, thanks. I'm sorry to just show up...with people...

Flush.

MARINA

No worries. Just need to decide what to do with the boys.

MICHELLE

They're your friends, right? I thought they were your friends.

MARINA

Uh huh.

Elizabeth comes out of the bathroom.

ELIZABETH

We should ask them to leave.

MARINA

Really?

ELIZABETH

We're not even dressed!

MARINA

That takes five minutes. This is the perfect...

MICHELLE

If you want me to go, just.

ELIZABETH

We'll catch up with them later, okay?

MARINA

They're not going to want to come back.

ELIZABETH

Fine, then.

MARINA
Emaad's going to think -

ELIZABETH
I said fine.

MARINA
I'll take care of it.

ELIZABETH
Thank you.

Marina exits to the garden.

MICHELLE
Is Emaad...?

ELIZABETH
Don't worry about it. It's nothing.

MICHELLE
He probably thinks I'm a total...

ELIZABETH
Forget about Emaad, okay? We were talking about you.

MICHELLE
Right.

ELIZABETH
You can stay here, Michelle. I mean not forever, but for a while.

MICHELLE
Thank you.

ELIZABETH
Marina may make me go somewhere with her, but until then...

MICHELLE
That's okay. Her brother's around.

ELIZABETH
You know him?

MICHELLE
We have some classes together.

ELIZABETH
Cool.

MICHELLE
He's a cool guy.

ELIZABETH
I'm sorry about what happened.

MICHELLE
I know.

ELIZABETH
I'm sure there's an explanation. I mean, everything's so...

MICHELLE
Why was Mom looking for a ticket for you?

ELIZABETH
What?

MICHELLE
That's what Mom said, that she was looking for a ticket for you. That's what I didn't get. That's why I looked in old mail.

ELIZABETH
But you didn't read her message?

MICHELLE
No.

ELIZABETH
You know, Mom gets these ideas.

MICHELLE
That you're going to go visit her?

ELIZABETH
Yeah. Or just go back. Or. It's just one of Mom's ideas, you know?

MICHELLE
Is it your idea too?

ELIZABETH
Hers. Mine. I don't know.

MICHELLE
When were you going to ask me?

ELIZABETH
Ask you what?

MICHELLE
What I thought about it.

ELIZABETH
I haven't even talked to Dad!

MICHELLE

You were going to talk to Dad before asking me?

ELIZABETH

He's my guardian.

MICHELLE

I'm your sister.

ELIZABETH

Exactly.

MICHELLE

So you can't make these kinds of choices without me.

ELIZABETH

Of course I can.

MICHELLE

That's not how it works.

ELIZABETH

Michelle.

MICHELLE

We came here together. I came to Kenya, to live with my father who I hate, and the ayah he's calling his wife who I hate even more, because you were coming. Don't you think I would want to leave with you?

ELIZABETH

I didn't ask you to come with me.

MICHELLE

You don't want me here.

ELIZABETH

Of course I...It isn't about you, Chelle.

MICHELLE

This whole thing that's happened to our parents you've been there. How could you just leave?

ELIZABETH

...Mom?

MICHELLE

Mom wants you back?

ELIZABETH

The bombing got her so freaked out. She's been emailing me ten times a day. I think she'd be better off if I were there.

MICHELLE

And she's not worried about me?

ELIZABETH

She is, but she...couldn't handle you.

MICHELLE

What do you mean?

ELIZABETH

She's not ready.

MICHELLE

No! If you're going. I'm going with you. I can't stay with them. Not without you around.

ELIZABETH

Well you can't go back to Mom.

MICHELLE

I don't hate Mom.

ELIZABETH

You were pretty hard on her last year.

MICHELLE

I was wrong. We're good now.

ELIZABETH

Now that you're not living with her, sure.

MICHELLE

That's not fair!

ELIZABETH

I know. You're better. But haven't you been getting her emails? She needs help.

MICHELLE

So do I!

ELIZABETH

She's trying to take care of herself, and I can - I want to help her.

MICHELLE

So you and Mom are just going to leave me to Dad and Amra?

ELIZABETH

They want to take care of you.

MICHELLE

They'll eat me alive! They'll hurt me, if you're not there.

ELIZABETH

Michelle, please.

MICHELLE

You think I'm exaggerating? I won't make it through the year.

ELIZABETH

Stop it.

MICHELLE

You can't make me stay with them!

ELIZABETH

It's not up to me.

MICHELLE

NO. LIZ! You can't - you can't leave me alone with him.
He's...Dad hit me!

ELIZABETH

I know.

MICHELLE

What are you going to do about that?

ELIZABETH

I don't have to do anything.

MICHELLE

Then who does?

ELIZABETH

You. No one. I don't know.

MICHELLE

I want to hurt him.

ELIZABETH

I know.

MICHELLE

I don't know how to hurt him. He's so strong, he's..

ELIZABETH

He's Dad.

MICHELLE

Yeah.

ELIZABETH

I don't know what to do. I just...I want you to leave me out
of it.

MICHELLE

No!

ELIZABETH

This has nothing to do with me. You're fighting with Dad. Last year you fought with Mom. You fight with everyone. Look at you. You're even fighting with me now. I want you to leave me out of it.

MICHELLE

You're in it!

ELIZABETH

No. I'm not.

MICHELLE

I hate you!

ELIZABETH

I don't care.

Marina enters, carrying a tray of strange food. Michelle looks as if the wind has been knocked out of her. She stares at Marina for a moment. Runs out.

MARINA

Is she all right?

ELIZABETH

No.

MARINA

Want to go after her?

ELIZABETH

I'm not dressed.

MARINA

I've got clothes.

Marina looks out the doorway after Michelle.

MARINA

She's run into the garden.

ELIZABETH

That's good.

MARINA

I'll go -

ELIZABETH

No. Just leave her. She would just yell at you too, if you tried to talk to her.

MARINA

You want to talk about it?

ELIZABETH

No.

MARINA

Okay.

ELIZABETH

Just let me sit for a minute.

Pause.

MARINA

Sometimes I'm not sure if you're attached to me or to this room.

Marina puts down the tray.

MARINA

Did you hear what happened?

ELIZABETH

The carjacking? Michelle told me.

MARINA

Your dad like, went nuts on the phone with my dad. That's why he sent Jacinta to wake us up.

ELIZABETH

Where's your mom?

MARINA

Out. Somewhere. I don't know.

ELIZABETH

In the Pajero?

MARINA

Right? I know. My parents don't really react to this kind of stuff anymore.

ELIZABETH

Sorry about my dad.

MARINA

You shouldn't blame him for it. It's just lack of experience, that's all. It's not like my parents are any less scared.

They've just...never known what it's like not to be in danger, you know?

ELIZABETH

We've lived in some dangerous places.

MARINA

What, like D.C.?

ELIZABETH

Yeah.

MARINA

Your best friends' mom ever get blown up in a terrorist attack?

ELIZABETH

No.

MARINA

Well, there you go. It's different. And my dad's been living with this kind of thing his whole life. So...

ELIZABETH

Yeah.

MARINA

Your dad'll get used to it. You'll get used to it.

ELIZABETH

I know. I'm not -

MARINA

It sucks, but you will.

ELIZABETH

Did the boys...?

MARINA

They went to Pizza Garden.

ELIZABETH

(envious) Oh. Pizza Garden.

MARINA

We've got food here. They're going to swing back around on the way to the Village.

ELIZABETH

Great.

MARINA

I told Emaad you had just gotten up. I made it sound like you were ashamed of seeing him when you hadn't, you know, made yourself up.

ELIZABETH

I never make myself up.

MARINA

I know. It was a way of...

ELIZABETH

I know.

MARINA

You want to talk about what happened with your sister?

ELIZABETH

No.

MARINA

Of course you don't.

ELIZABETH

My family's complicated.

MARINA

Sure, all families are.

ELIZABETH

Yours isn't.

MARINA

And yours wouldn't be either if you chose to deal with it that way.

ELIZABETH

What are you talking about?

MARINA

It's messed up, but it's not complicated. Your dad left your mom for the ayah. What's complicated about that? Seriously. The complicated part is you.

ELIZABETH

What's wrong with me?

MARINA

I don't know. You don't tell me anything.

ELIZABETH

Why should I? You just end up making fun of me.

MARINA

Oh, come on.

ELIZABETH

You make my problems feel small.

MARINA

I don't mean to. It's just what I do. Try to put things in perspective.

ELIZABETH

Whatever.

MARINA

Your problems are small.

ELIZABETH

If you can't relate to what I'm going through, you can just say that. It's okay.

MARINA

No, I can. I just... there are a lot of things I've seen, I've been through, okay? Your parents' divorce, in comparison...

ELIZABETH

You know what divorce feels like?

MARINA

If you knew...if you knew what it felt like. If you'd been here, even. If people you knew -

ELIZABETH

I was here. We arrived the day before the bomb. Michelle and I. The day before.

MARINA

Right.

ELIZABETH

You don't think it affected me?

MARINA

That's not what I'm trying to say.

ELIZABETH

It freaked me out.

MARINA

But you'd just gotten here!

ELIZABETH

That doesn't make a difference.

MARINA

It's different when it's people you know.

ELIZABETH

(pause) I think I'm going to leave.

MARINA

That's silly.

ELIZABETH

I'm serious.

MARINA

Why would you leave because of this? I mean, Melissa, I understand. Her Mom died. But - you just got here.

ELIZABETH

And it's not what I expected! I came here...there was so much going on in my life last year, I came here to get away from the drama.

MARINA

Right.

ELIZABETH

I stepped off the plane and it was quiet. I could hear the quiet it was so quiet. And then the next day...it starts all over again.

MARINA

You think it'll be quieter back home?

ELIZABETH

Yeah.

MARINA

But everyone left! School is half empty! It's so unbelievably quiet here.

ELIZABETH

You don't live in my house.

MARINA

You practically live here.

ELIZABETH

And there's a reason for that.

MARINA

But I let you come here as much as you want. So I don't understand what the problem is.

ELIZABETH

The problem is that this is the only place I can be, here.

MARINA

What are you talking about? We go other places. We go out, to the Barn, Carni. We go to the Village, we go to school.

ELIZABETH

And it's all dangerous.

MARINA

School?

ELIZABETH

There are kites circling.

MARINA

You're scared of that?

ELIZABETH

They ripped the sandwich out of my hands. My first day. I had to go to the nurse.

MARINA

And now you know where to eat your lunch, and it hasn't happened since. That stuff happens.

ELIZABETH

Killer birds?

MARINA

Fine, so there's stuff to get used to. But nothing like this, like the bombing has happened here before.

ELIZABETH

Nothing like the Mau Mau?

MARINA

Where did you hear about the Mau Mau?

ELIZABETH

I read.

MARINA

This isn't like that.

ELIZABETH

It doesn't feel all that different to me.

MARINA

Fine, then nothing like this has happened since Independence.

ELIZABETH

What about the carjacking? That's something I'm supposed to get used to?

MARINA

Yeah. They just want our cars. So, okay. So we won't take the Pajero at night anymore. We'll ask your dad if we can borrow the Fiat. No one will touch us in the Fiat.

ELIZABETH

Marina, that's not...

MARINA

Yeah, it is. It's how you do this, okay?

ELIZABETH

Do what?

MARINA

Live here.

ELIZABETH

But that's what I'm saying. I don't want to.

MARINA

But you do.

ELIZABETH

I have a choice. I know you don't understand that. Your whole family is here. This is your home, whatever that means. You've got that. And you don't have an option.

MARINA

This is where you live, too.

ELIZABETH

Did you do this to Melissa? Did you try to convince her to stay?

MARINA

No.

ELIZABETH

You probably would have, if you'd had time.

MARINA

I'm not heartless, Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

I've lost my mother, too.

MARINA

And hurting the rest of us is going to help that?

ELIZABETH

You don't know anything.

MARINA

I know that you have a life here, even if you don't think you do. And you're not running away.

ELIZABETH

It's my choice.

MARINA

Fine. Go home, then. Talk to your dad.

ELIZABETH

Marina, I want you to understand.

MARINA

No. I don't have time for this, okay? I'm not going to spend all this time being nice to someone who's just planning to up and leave.

ELIZABETH

Marina.

MARINA

Get out.

ELIZABETH

I don't want it to be like that. I don't want...

MARINA

I'm going to the Village. If you don't want to go home you can take a shower, get dressed, and come with me.

ELIZABETH

Please. Why can't we just stay here?

MARINA

The boys are coming back. They're picking us up. That's already arranged. We're going to the Village. Play mini golf. Eat gelato.

ELIZABETH

I don't want to.

MARINA

I'm getting in the shower now. Eat some breakfast.

ELIZABETH

I can't.

MARINA

Fine, then don't. That's a choice you have, I don't care.

ELIZABETH

We shouldn't be going out at all, Marina. There are carjackers on the loose. The boys are driving a Land Cruiser, we'll be a perfect target for...

MARINA

For nothing.

ELIZABETH

Please.

MARINA

Come with me, or call your dad. Get him to pick up both you and your loser sister. Get out of here.

Silence.

MARINA

I don't care what you do. Just make up your mind before I get out of the shower, okay?

Marina exits to the bathroom, slams the door. Elizabeth grabs an instrument, and goes to hit it. She stops herself.

Darkness. Noise.

SCENE 2

Michelle and Anteri enter the Noise Room.

MICHELLE

Ugh. Do we have to go in here?

ANTERI

We can mess it up.

MICHELLE

Okay.

ANTERI

I like this room. This used to be my room. Before my sister...

MICHELLE

They took it over?

ANTERI

Marina still lets me use it when your sister isn't around. She's actually nice to me when people aren't around.

MICHELLE

My sister's the opposite.

ANTERI

Really?

MICHELLE

Pretends like we're best friends in public. Then treats me like shit.

ANTERI

They've gone, anyway.

MICHELLE

Thanks for finding me.

ANTERI

Sure.

MICHELLE

I would have sat in that tree all day, I think.

ANTERI

It is all day.

MICHELLE

Yeah.

ANTERI
What's wrong with your eye?

MICHELLE
What? Nothing.

ANTERI
Did you hit it on something?

MICHELLE
I don't know. I must have.

ANTERI
You have to be home soon?

MICHELLE
No.

ANTERI
Cool.

MICHELLE
Your parents...you eat dinner?

ANTERI
Sometimes. They have to eat out. They always have to eat out.

MICHELLE
Oh.

ANTERI
Sometimes they have people here. Then we have to eat with them. Put on a happy face.

MICHELLE
You're not happy? Your family seems happy.

ANTERI
It's not so much a family as a job. You know? We're the face of Finland and all that.

MICHELLE
I always thought that being an Ambassador would be so much...fun.

ANTERI
My dad likes it.

MICHELLE
That's good I guess. I think my dad likes his job, too.

ANTERI
What does he do?

MICHELLE

He's a scientist. Agriculture. ICRAF.

ANTERI

That's cool.

Anteri pulls out a pipe. Prepares it.

MICHELLE

You do a lot of drugs?

ANTERI

I guess.

MICHELLE

That's cool.

ANTERI

No, not really.

MICHELLE

I heard they're illegal. I mean, they're illegal everywhere, but I hear they're illegal here.

ANTERI

They aren't illegal everywhere.

MICHELLE

Right, but, you know.

ANTERI

Yeah, you get ten years in jail.

MICHELLE

Exactly. Doesn't that scare you?

ANTERI

I mostly smoke out here.

MICHELLE

But, buying it?

ANTERI

I get it from Jeff's driver.

MICHELLE

Oh.

ANTERI

I would never get in trouble for it. I mean, they're not going to send a mzungu to jail. It's not like Singapore or anything.

MICHELLE

What?

ANTERI

You get caned. You remember that American kid that got caned?

MICHELLE

Right.

ANTERI

But no, I mean, just because there's a law doesn't mean anyone follows it. You could buy your way out if they decided to arrest you, you know?

MICHELLE

Your parents would pay for that?

ANTERI

I guess.

MICHELLE

Do they know you do drugs?

ANTERI

I guess.

MICHELLE

You're so lucky, they're like, laid-back. Cool.

ANTERI

No, they've just got their priorities straight. They care that I go to school, I get good grades. Behave myself with their guests. They know that...the rest of it is bullshit.

MICHELLE

But you do drugs. I've never known anyone who...

ANTERI

Do you want some?

MICHELLE

No. No thank you.

ANTERI

Okay.

MICHELLE

I like you.

ANTERI

Cool.

MICHELLE

I was just saying, I've never known anyone who...wasn't a fuck-up.

ANTERI

Yeah?

MICHELLE

Aren't you afraid it's going to make you stupid?

ANTERI

Sometimes.

MICHELLE

It's just that...people I've known who, they turn into fuck-ups. They don't do well in school, they...fuck everything up.

ANTERI

Because they're doing it to rebel.

MICHELLE

Yeah! I guess.

ANTERI

And I'm not rebelling.

MICHELLE

Is that it?

ANTERI

My dad used to smoke when I was little.

MICHELLE

Really?

ANTERI

Yeah, so. I'm not rebelling, I'm relaxing.

MICHELLE

That's cool.

ANTERI

Uh huh.

MICHELLE

Why do you need to relax?

ANTERI

Same reason as the next person.

MICHELLE

Uh huh. What's that?

ANTERI

I get worked up.

MICHELLE

Yeah, me too. What about?

ANTERI

Everything! The world. I mean, I look at the world, there's all this messed-up stuff. All these people fighting, killing each other. I mean, you read the paper?

MICHELLE

No. Well, sometimes.

ANTERI

There's so much going on. And what can I do but get worked up about it? I get to feeling like I'm trapped in this little box, this bubble, and people are screaming outside. Like their bodies are on fire and they're screaming, and I'm...I'm doing fine. My body is fine, I'm in this bubble...and I want to help them but there's nothing I can do, I can't get out of the bubble. I'm stuck there.

MICHELLE

Uh huh.

ANTERI

That's why I smoke.

MICHELLE

That's so sad.

ANTERI

I know.

MICHELLE

Why don't you think you can help?

ANTERI

Cause! I'm some fifteen year-old Finnish kid who's never even lived in Finland. I don't know the first thing about anything.

MICHELLE

You know a lot.

ANTERI

Right.

MICHELLE

I need help. You could help me.

ANTERI
What's wrong with you?

MICHELLE
Everything.

ANTERI
I don't see that.

MICHELLE
Well then you must be smoking something.

ANTERI
Right. Seriously, what's wrong with you?

MICHELLE
It's not me, so much, as everyone around me. It's like everyone around me is...ganging up on me. Trying to make things hard. Sometimes I feel like that, like I'm being attacked from every side, you know?

ANTERI
Okay.

MICHELLE
And yeah, that's it. I'm not in any bubble. I guess I'm in that fire.

ANTERI
Seriously, though.

MICHELLE
I'm being serious.

ANTERI
But you're fine, really. I'm not talking about you. You're not really suffering.

MICHELLE
How can you say that?

ANTERI
You haven't been hurt by any of it. You haven't lost your family to AIDS or war or famine. You have food every day, you go to a good school, have people who care about you. No one's trying to kill you...

MICHELLE
I have nothing.

ANTERI
That is such crap!

MICHELLE

They are trying to kill me.

ANTERI

What do you mean?

MICHELLE

I mean, they're trying to kill us. Americans.

ANTERI

Because of the bombing?

MICHELLE

Yeah.

ANTERI

That was a freak occurrence. A once in a lifetime tragedy. It's not something you can worry about on a daily basis. It would be like worrying about cancer.

MICHELLE

I do worry about cancer.

ANTERI

Then maybe you are messed up.

MICHELLE

You don't know anything about me.

ANTERI

I know you.

MICHELLE

Sitting in your little bubble, talking about problems you see out there, you read in the newspaper and how you can't fix anything. Do you really see any of it? Do you feel anything?

ANTERI

Yes. But I have a sense of perspective, that's all.

MICHELLE

Fuck perspective! I'm talking about you. Haven't you ever felt anything? Ever lost anything?

ANTERI

Nothing important.

MICHELLE

I'm not talking about important or not important. What have you lost?

ANTERI

Nothing.

And why not?
MICHELLE

I've been lucky.
ANTERI

No. Because you don't have anything!
MICHELLE

What do you mean? I have everything. I'm so...privileged.
ANTERI

If you'd ever had anything you would have lost something by now. You just...you live in this house, your parents don't care what you do...you do what you want, but it isn't your place. It isn't your country. You don't even have a country. You don't belong to anything. So nothing belongs to you.
MICHELLE

I know. And that's why -
ANTERI

No. That's how! Why is because you're scared.
MICHELLE

I'm not scared.
ANTERI

Then kiss me.
MICHELLE

Oh.
ANTERI

Don't you want to kiss me?
MICHELLE

Yeah. Yeah, I do, but...
ANTERI

Kiss me.
MICHELLE

Anteri kisses her.

Wow.
ANTERI

How was that?
MICHELLE

Nice.
ANTERI

MICHELLE

And what would you do if I told you it wasn't real?

ANTERI

It felt real.

MICHELLE

It wasn't.

ANTERI

Oh.

MICHELLE

I don't even like you. I mean, I thought I liked you as a friend, before today. But now, now that I know more about you, I just...no.

ANTERI

What do you mean?

MICHELLE

And kissing you. It was like licking ash. It was disgusting. You're so...repulsive.

Anteri stares at her. Tears.

MICHELLE

Feel something?

ANTERI

Fuck you.

MICHELLE

You feel something, don't you?

ANTERI

Hatred.

MICHELLE

That's good. That's really good.

ANTERI

What do you mean? You want me to hate you? What the hell are you...?

MICHELLE

Popping your bubble.

ANTERI

Fuck.

Anteri hits some instruments, throws some things around.

Michelle watches a moment, then joins him. He stops.

MICHELLE
How do you feel?

ANTERI
Naked.

MICHELLE
You look good naked.

ANTERI
I hate you!

MICHELLE
Hatred's good. Hatred's real good.

ANTERI
Yeah.

MICHELLE
I hate everyone!

ANTERI
Who do you hate?

MICHELLE
I hate my mom and my dad and my stepmom! I hate President Moi and President Clinton, I hate the terrorists and I hate my sister and I hate your sister!

ANTERI
Me too!

MICHELLE
You hate Marina?

ANTERI
Yeah! She's a bitch!

MICHELLE
She is! Yes! I hate her and I hate all the seniors! I hate everyone, everyone at our school!

ANTERI
I hate them too!

MICHELLE
Except you. I don't hate you.

ANTERI
Really?

MICHELLE

Yeah, that was just for the experiment.

ANTERI

It felt real.

MICHELLE

I'm sorry.

ANTERI

It felt way too real.

Darkness. Noise.

SCENE 3

Evening. Elizabeth lies on the bed, still. A soft knock on the door.

JACINTA

(offstage)

Ho dee! Ho dee!

Elizabeth ignores her.

JACINTA

Ho dee!

Sound of Jacinta putting down tray outside. Liz waits a minute. Goes to door. Emaad stands there with a glass of water.

EMAAD

Hi.

Elizabeth tries to shut the door, Emaad catches it.

EMAAD

I'm coming in.

ELIZABETH

Go away.

EMAAD

I'm in.

Elizabeth goes back to the bed, lies down.

ELIZABETH

What do you want?

EMAAD

Why don't you come out?

ELIZABETH

I'm fine in here.

EMAAD

We miss you, out there, though.

ELIZABETH

Good for you.

EMAAD

We need to talk about this. I mean, if I've done something to make you uncomfortable...

ELIZABETH

Kissed me.

EMAAD

Yes. Then I would like to make things right.

ELIZABETH

And how would you like to make things right, Emaad?

EMAAD

What?

ELIZABETH

What would you think was right?

EMAAD

I - I - I don't know, I. Whatever you...

ELIZABETH

I'm cool, Emaad. Everything's all right with me.

EMAAD

Okay.

ELIZABETH

So you can just go back out there to Marina's little party, and don't you worry about little me holed up in this room by myself.

EMAAD

I did something wrong.

ELIZABETH

Did you plan it?

EMAAD

What?

ELIZABETH

The kiss.

EMAAD

I don't know. I guess.

ELIZABETH

Why?

EMAAD

I wanted to.

Why?
ELIZABETH

I like you.
EMAAD

Did you like me before last night?
ELIZABETH

Yeah, I guess. Since you came to school.
EMAAD

You like the way I look.
ELIZABETH

I'm not sure I like you now.
EMAAD

Sorry.
ELIZABETH

I'm gonna go back to the porch. If you're coming -
EMAAD

I -
ELIZABETH

It's okay for someone to like you, Elizabeth. It doesn't mean there's something wrong with him.
EMAAD

I don't think there's anything wrong with you.
ELIZABETH

But you're not interested, it's okay. I get it.
EMAAD

No.
ELIZABETH

You are interested.
EMAAD

I don't know.
ELIZABETH

What's not to know? Either you're feeling it or you're not, right?
EMAAD

It's not that simple.
ELIZABETH

Are you feeling it? EMAAD

I don't know. Yes. ELIZABETH

Okay. Then we're good. That's good. EMAAD

No, then we're not good. Then we're very very bad. ELIZABETH

How? EMAAD

We have nothing - ELIZABETH

In common? EMAAD

Yeah. ELIZABETH

We go to the same school. We live in the same neighborhood, we hang out at the same places, we have the same friends. We like each other. Right? What's not common? EMAAD

You play soccer. You're like, an athlete. ELIZABETH

So? EMAAD

I couldn't care less about soccer. ELIZABETH

So? *(beat)* You like music, right? That's why you like it here? EMAAD

I guess. ELIZABETH

I like music, too. EMAAD

Everyone likes music. ELIZABETH

I play the trumpet. I'm in the band, at school. EMAAD

ELIZABETH
It's a requirement.

EMAAD
I could have taken art.

ELIZABETH
Right.

EMAAD
What does it matter?

ELIZABETH
It doesn't. That's just it. None of it matters. I'm going to leave.

EMAAD
I'm sorry. I didn't -

ELIZABETH
No, not leave leave. Not now. I'm going back to D.C. End of the semester.

EMAAD
But you just got here.

ELIZABETH
I know.

EMAAD
So that's it. Your family's...

ELIZABETH
No, just me.

EMAAD
But you have to stay till the end of senior year. It's just one year. Not even,

ELIZABETH
I know, but my family's...my mom's in a bad place. I have to go back to the states to be with her, so...

EMAAD
So that's it? You're just going to let your mom decide what you're going to do?

ELIZABETH
She needs me.

EMAAD
I need you.

ELIZABETH

You don't even know me.

EMAAD

You're right. I don't need you. But I'd like you to stay.

ELIZABETH

And...what?

EMAAD

Nothing. It'll be cool if you stay.

ELIZABETH

And you'll be my...boyfriend?

EMAAD

I don't know about that. I just think it would be cool if you stayed. Senior year is fun, you know. I'll take you to the prom.

ELIZABETH

There's a prom?

EMAAD

At the Safariland hotel. It's cool. There's a casino. You can't drink, though, cause it's a school event. But we all go to Carni afterwards.

ELIZABETH

Yeah?

EMAAD

You have someone else you'd rather go to the prom with, back home?

ELIZABETH

No.

EMAAD

I'm not promising anything, but I think that if you stay, you'll have a good time. A better time.

ELIZABETH

But I can't. My family. It's not just my mom, my dad...

EMAAD

What's wrong with yours?

ELIZABETH

He and my stepmom fight. I don't know how much longer I can take it... They fight all the time.

EMAAD

Mine too.

ELIZABETH

Yeah. But not just like, normal fighting. Not like my mom and dad used to fight. They...they hurt each other, you know?

EMAAD

He hits her.

ELIZABETH

They both do it.

EMAAD

My Dad's the same.

ELIZABETH

He ever hit you?

EMAAD

He punched me once.

ELIZABETH

Yeah.

EMAAD

Yours?

ELIZABETH

No. No, it's just...he hasn't always been like this. It's since we got here.

EMAAD

It's new.

ELIZABETH

He's changed. He doesn't want me to go out at night, to go anywhere after dark. If I'm ten minutes late coming home he freaks.

EMAAD

But he lets you -

ELIZABETH

No! I don't tell him I go out with Marina. He thinks I just come over here and spend the night. And then something like this carjacking happens, and I don't know. I guess I freak too.

EMAAD

You heard it was a hoax, right?

ELIZABETH

What?

EMAAD

The carjacking, it was a hoax. Not that there aren't carjackings. There are carjackings.

ELIZABETH

Great.

EMAAD

I know what it's like, though. When we first got here my dad was so scared of black people. He thought everyone was going to rob him or something. And now, he's African. Like most of his friends are African.

ELIZABETH

My dad's not a racist.

EMAAD

That's not what I'm saying.

ELIZABETH

I understand why he's scared. That's just it.

EMAAD

It's a scary place to live, I know.

ELIZABETH

But you're trying to make it sound like it would be fun here if I stayed.

EMAAD

I think you'll have more fun than you will back home with your mom. That's all.

ELIZABETH

It's safer back home.

EMAAD

So it's not about your mom. You're leaving because you're scared.

ELIZABETH

It is about my mom. Haven't you been listening to me?

EMAAD

I have, but I think it's all bullshit.

ELIZABETH

Well, go talk to Marina. She's still trying to pretend like nothing's dangerous here. The two of you can go play in your little denial club together.

EMAAD

I'm not in denial. I said, I know why you're scared. It's just bullshit to run, that's all.

ELIZABETH

Who are you? Who asked you to come in here and start telling me what to think? You don't even know me.

EMAAD

I want to get to know you.

ELIZABETH

Yeah, I know. You want to "know" me. You're pissed off that I'm going to leave and you're not going to get laid.

EMAAD

You think that's all I want?

ELIZABETH

You're just like Marina. Just like everyone else. You just want me to be something for you. Your prom date. You just want to me to be something that's not what I want to be.

EMAAD

Just like your mom and dad?

ELIZABETH

You leave my parents out of this.

EMAAD

I'm sorry, but it sounds like they've been messing with your head.

ELIZABETH

Well, maybe I'm just trying to make it sound that way to spare your feelings.

EMAAD

Don't spare them, then.

ELIZABETH

Fine. I'm going because I don't want this. I don't want to go out drinking every Friday and Saturday night with a girl who's supposed to be my friend, but she's a bitch. I don't want to live in a house with servants and have to watch my stepmother treat them like animals. I don't want to have to deal with my father and his fear, or my sister and her war with him. And I don't want to be hiding in a room at the back of a friend's house because there are carjackers and people with bombs trying to kill Americans because it's the only place I feel safe and I don't even feel safe here right now because there's some creepy Middle Eastern guy trying to get into my pants!

Emaad turns to leave.

EMAAD

Fuck you.

ELIZABETH

I thought you could take it.

EMAAD

I can. I just see what the problem is now. I'm going.

ELIZABETH

I was just saying how it looks - the facts of it. I'm not--

EMAAD

A racist? Just like your dad?

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry, Emaad.

EMAAD

I'm gone.

Emaad opens the door. Marina is standing in the doorway.

ELIZABETH

Marina. Fuck.

MARINA

He's Bahai, you know.

ELIZABETH

What does that mean?

MARINA

It means he's not even Muslim.

ELIZABETH

I don't give a shit about that. My stepmom is Muslim. How long were you listening?

MARINA

It's my house.

ELIZABETH

And that gives you the right to eavesdrop?

MARINA

Yeah. Yeah, it does. You lock yourself in my bedroom with my ex-boyfriend and I think I'm allowed to listen in.

EMAAD

Your what?

MARINA

What makes you think you can talk to him like that?

EMAAD

Please don't stand up for me, Marina. I'm just trying to go.

MARINA

Well, Imran and Daniel and Gicho just left. So you missed your ride.

EMAAD

Why didn't you tell me?

MARINA

I didn't want to...walk in on anything. You said you were coming in here to put your moves on her.

EMAAD

I did not say that.

MARINA

Yeah, well someone did, and I didn't hear you disagree.

EMAAD

Elizabeth. Listen.

MARINA

But I guess your moves didn't get you very far. Can't say the same for my brother. I just went upstairs and found him making out with your sister.

ELIZABETH

What?

MARINA

How come you didn't fall for it, huh Liz? He asked you to the prom. That usually works for him.

EMAAD

Marina.

MARINA

You know he took me last year? He was a terrible date.

EMAAD

Excuse me?

MARINA

He spent the whole time worrying about how to spike the punch, off in the corner laughing with his friends. He didn't even dance with me.

EMAAD

We weren't dating anymore, Marina. I didn't have to -

MARINA

But it was still a date.

EMAAD

Well I'm sorry if I disappointed you because I thought it was just two friends who didn't have dates. I'm sorry if I gave you another impression.

MARINA

I'm sorry, too.

EMAAD

Can I go now?

MARINA

I'm not done.

EMAAD

Well I am.

Emaad pushes Marina aside.

Michelle bursts through the space, Anteri in tow. Michelle lets her hair fall over her face, hiding her bruise.

MICHELLE

Dad's here.

ELIZABETH

What?

MICHELLE

Dad. He's here. His car just pulled into the driveway.

ELIZABETH

What the hell?

MICHELLE

You've gotta go talk to him. Don't tell him I'm here, okay?

ELIZABETH

He'd freak out.

MICHELLE

I don't care. I just can't see him yet.

MARINA

He knows you're here.

ELIZABETH

You called him.

MICHELLE

Why? Why would you do that?

MARINA

Oh my god. So he would know where you were!

MICHELLE

I didn't want him to know. I didn't want him to find me.

MARINA

Well it's my house. I get to decide how long you can hide here, okay?

ANTERI

I can decide, too.

MARINA

Shut up.

ANTERI

Michelle, you can stay as long as you want.

MARINA

No she can't.

ANTERI

I'll go talk to your dad for you if you want.

MICHELLE

Really?

ELIZABETH

Where is he? Is he gonna walk in here any -

ANTERI

My mom's got him.

ELIZABETH

So he won't be here for a while.

MARINA

What does that mean?

ANTERI

Leave it.

MARINA

They can't just hide out in here, Ant. What are you going to say to their dad? Their dad. He's worried about them. He wants to know that they're all right. And they're being -

ANTERI

Have you looked at this girl's face?

MARINA

What, she's been crying, so?

ANTERI

Look at it.

Anteri holds Michelle's face in full view. The bruise has turned into a shiner.

EMAAD

Damn.

ELIZABETH

Oh my god.

MICHELLE

It's not as bad as it...

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry, kid.

MICHELLE

Maybe we should just go. It won't be that bad.

EMAAD

He did this to you?

Michelle nods.

EMAAD

You can't go anywhere near him.

MARINA

Fine. But Liz should still go.

ELIZABETH

What?

MARINA

He hasn't hit you, has he?

ANTERI

Not yet.

EMAAD

I'm sorry. Let me take you someplace.

ANTERI

Yeah.

EMAAD

If you can't stay here I can take you someplace.

ELIZABETH

Really?

EMAAD

Yeah, Liz. I didn't know.

ELIZABETH

Where will you take me? Your place?

EMAAD

No. I don't know. Someplace else.

ELIZABETH

Okay.

MARINA

Yeah, okay. Just keep running.

ELIZABETH

What does that mean?

MARINA

What does it matter if you go home? It'll only be for a couple of nights, and then you're just going to take off from here.

ELIZABETH

I'm not going right this minute!

MICHELLE

No, this minute you're going to run off and make me deal with Dad by myself.

ELIZABETH

You can come too!

MICHELLE

Oh, really? I'm allowed to do that this time?

ELIZABETH

Urgh! Will you stop that? Stop playing the martyr.

MICHELLE

What am I supposed to do, when you're such a coward.

ELIZABETH

I'm not.

MARINA

You're a coward.

EMAAD

Liz, let's go. Someplace safe. You too, Michelle.

ELIZABETH

Where are we going?

EMAAD

Do you trust me?

ELIZABETH

I don't know.

EMAAD

I'm going, either way.

MARINA

You don't have a ride.

ELIZABETH

Please.

MARINA

You don't have a ride and you don't have a safe place. You're going to take her to your house? I've met your dad. Don't offer her things you don't have, that you don't really want to give. It's cruel, okay?

EMAAD

Marina, if this is about...

MARINA

Fuck you! You have no idea what this is about! *(pause)* I miss Melissa.

ELIZABETH

I know.

MARINA

You are all wrong. Ever since you came to school! No Melissa, no half the rest of the class...but there's you. So I thought. Okay, Melissa's gone but here's this girl. It's gonna be okay.

ELIZABETH

And I'm not Melissa.

MARINA

No.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry. I wish I was.

MARINA

We were supposed to have senior year. Class outing. Christmas at the coast. Camping at Lake Naivasha. Senior trip. Graduation...and all the Friday and Saturday nights. How could she go?

ELIZABETH

She had to.

MARINA

She was my best friend. I needed her. And just like that, she's gone.

ELIZABETH

She didn't...die. You'll see her again. You could write to her.

MARINA

I don't write to people.

ELIZABETH

You could start.

Marina looks around the room.

MARINA

This is where I came when it happened. This room. It's always been here you know, but like a shed. For stuff you collect but you don't know why? But when it happened I knew why. I came straight here. It was...Melissa was the one to call me. She had just gotten back from the summer, I didn't even know she was back. I hadn't talked to her yet. She called, it was Melissa, I said, "How was your summer?" She said, "Fine, I fell in love, it was a dream, but forget that. They just blew up my mom." They blew up my mom. I didn't know what she was talking about. "What do you mean? Where's your mom?" I thought maybe her mom was on vacation in Israel or someplace. Someplace dangerous. I mean. Nairobi. Nairobi has dangers, people get robbed and shit. People get carjacked and shot on the side of the road, but people don't get blown up. "Turn on the news, dipshit" she said. She said that. Her mom had just been blown up and she called me dipshit. I turned on KTN. She was still on the phone. They were playing CNN. They'd blown up the American Embassy in town.

Ufundi House, where my doctor is, had gone with it. Collapsed. What the fuck? Why? And there had been another explosion in Dar. I mean, what would be next? What embassy was next? For a moment I felt safe because like, they wouldn't hit here again, right? They'd already gotten Nairobi and they hadn't gotten me. But Melissa's mom. "She's at work?" "Fuck yeah, she's at fucking work." "She could be okay," I said, "She could be alive." And then the line went dead. I mean, like cut off. I tried calling her back but I couldn't get another line.

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry.

MARINA

I couldn't get over there. She was in Lavington and my parents were out with the cars. They were at UNEP, I knew they were all right. But they had the cars and Alfred was on holiday. So that was that. Me in the house. I guess Jacinta was in the kitchen but I didn't think about that. I just ran in here. Ripped everything off the walls and threw it on the floor. It was loud, it was satisfying, you know?

ELIZABETH

I know.

MARINA

Her dad's still around. I saw him at Sarit Center. He's like, funny. He's trying to cover, but he's off, he can't leave. People keep trying to get him to leave, but he won't. I never go to town, you know? Why would I go to town? You go down Uhuru Highway, you go past it, but that's that. So I like to forget. Just pretend that it's a small class this year and Melissa left, but best friends have left before, they leave all the time, so...you go on. And security's tight so you do remember but...twelve people we know died. That's it. Two hundred Kenyans. It's...it's only when I see Melissa's father.

ELIZABETH

Yeah.

MARINA

I get angry.

ELIZABETH

Yeah.

MARINA

I get angry. Like they took something that was mine.

ELIZABETH

I know.

MARINA

How do you know? You weren't here! You didn't know Melissa!
She wasn't your friend, your best friend, your whole...fuck.

ELIZABETH

You're right. I don't know.

MARINA

Thank you.

ELIZABETH

I don't know anything about anything. I'm just...just the new
girl.

MARINA

Until you leave again?

ELIZABETH

I guess.

MARINA

When are you going to stop running?

ELIZABETH

When I stop being scared?

MARINA

You're never going to stop being scared.

ELIZABETH

What do you mean?

MARINA

Everyone's scared.

ELIZABETH

I didn't used to be.

MARINA

You were a kid.

ELIZABETH

Oh.

MARINA

This is what it's like to be a grown-up.

Silence. They look at each other.

MICHELLE

I don't know what to do, Liz.

ELIZABETH

So it's up to me to decide?

MICHELLE

You're my sister. You look out for me.

ELIZABETH

I don't want to anymore.

MICHELLE

I need you to.

ELIZABETH

I don't know how.

MICHELLE

How could you go?

ELIZABETH

How could I do anything else?

MICHELLE

We want you to stay.

ELIZABETH

You do?

MARINA

I do.

ELIZABETH

I'm tired of doing things that other people want.

EMAAD

What do you want?

ELIZABETH

I want to be in a place that's mine.

MICHELLE

You have your own room. At home.

ANTERI

This place is...

ELIZABETH

Marina's.

MARINA

You can stay, Liz. I'm sorry. You can stay here as long as you want.

ELIZABETH

No, it's yours. We have to go. Let's go Michelle.

MICHELLE

I'm not ready.

ELIZABETH

Neither am I.

MICHELLE

I'm not going to school tomorrow.

ELIZABETH

That's fine.

MICHELLE

He just...he wasn't himself this morning. I have to accept that he wasn't himself.

ELIZABETH

He hasn't been himself.

MICHELLE

No.

ELIZABETH

None of us have been.

MICHELLE

Yeah.

ELIZABETH

But it's okay. Don't worry, kid. I'll take care of you.

MICHELLE

I'll take care of you, too.

ELIZABETH

Wish us luck.

*Anteri kisses Michelle, lets her go.
Elizabeth and Michelle exit. Silence
is held until silence becomes
awkward.*

EMAAD

I guess I'll go, too.

MARINA

You don't have to.

EMAAD

No?

No. ANTERI

What are you going to do? EMAAD

I don't know. ANTERI

Going to smoke up? MARINA

I don't know. ANTERI

They sit. Marina walks around the room, picking up instruments and putting them back in their places.

Lights. End play.